

WYCOMBE WANDERERS, trying out eight new players, could hardly have wished for a better start to the season's campaign in Tuesday night when they out-gunned Southern Leaguers Atherstone 3-1 in the opening friendly.

The scoreline doesn't do justice to Wycombe, as they dominated the match for long periods and were seldom worried by their Warwickshire opponents. All the newcomers knitted in well with last year's Enfield full back Roger Grant the pick of the seven.

Phil Wood, who turned out for Wycombe in the friendly with Altrincham last term before leaving for Enfield, combined well with Dave Bullock while young Graham Mackenzie buzzed around eagerly in the first half.

Steve Perrin, a strong front-runner who went on tour with the Blues, looked forceful if a little slow while former Hillingdon full back Ray Brandon joined in well with many attacking moves.

PROMISE

Second half substitutes Dillon Evans, with Cheltenham last term, Tony Brothers (ex St. Albans) and local product Dave Woodbridge also showed plenty of promise.

These players, coupled with the experience of Larry Pritchard, Keith Searle, Dave Bullock and co. made up an impressive looking squad on the night and it just remains to be seen how many decide to stay on at Loakes Park.

At first it was odd to see the Blues turning out minus John Delaney but as the game progressed, Bullock began to revel in his new responsibility as number one centre back. Dave, who was up with the attack as early as the second minute trying a pot-shot from 30 yards, will plug the Delaney gap more than adequately on Tuesday's day.

Larry Pritchard, the new club skipper, seemed to be carrying on where he left off last season. He's lost none of his flair and, as usual, he played the major role in promoting attacks.

Other players to shine were Mick Hollifield, now made to measure for midfield, Kenny Swain and Keith Searle. Swain was as elusive as ever, beating defenders time and again, while Searle scored two goals and was robbed of the hat-trick by an own goal. In two matches this season, Keith has chalked up no less than five goals. He scored three against Algerian Airways

By STUART EARP, Wycombe Wanderers 3, Atherstone 1

last Saturday and again showed his tremendous value and consistency.

Searle put Wanderers ahead in the seventh minute after one of many neat, fast and incisive attacking raids. Swain made the opening by jiggling past two defenders and laying the ball off to Mackenzie. He drew the keeper, and slipped the ball inside for Searle to slot home.

In the 18th minute, Wycombe made it 2-0 with a move that brought them many a goal last season. A tremendous 40 yard

through ball from Pritchard found Searle, who ran on and side-stepped the keeper Clamp before shooting towards an empty net. Full back Warhurst raced across to clear but could only screw the ball in his own goal.

"That man" Searle was on target again in the 33rd minute, this time crashing a superb drive into the top corner of the net from the edge of the area.

John Maskell, the only keeper in the squad at present, was called upon only once in the first half when he palmed

Harper's shot around the post in the 43rd minute. Apart from that, John's only problems came from high crosses which he cut out perfectly.

Atherstone, who clinched promotion from Division One South to the Premier in the Southern League last season, were eminently disappointing throughout the first 45 minutes. A half time change sparked some life into the side but only

Bobby Mackay, keeper Malcolm Clamp and centre back Quinney really looked com-

petent.

Evans and Brothers replaced Perrin and Mackenzie for the new half and Evans almost scored with his first kick of the game, only Clamp's outstretched boot preventing a fourth goal. Woodbridge replaced Swain in the 20th minute.

A fine shot from McKay from outside the area pulled the score back to 3-1, his low drive curling just wide of Maskell's fingers.

Hollifield hit a post and Searle had two efforts bravely saved by Clamp before the final whistle and one was left wondering just what the side will be like with Rob Williams, Tony Horseman, Ian Rundle and possibly John Hutchinson still on the sidelines.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, R. Brandon, P. Wood, D. Bullock, R. Grant, M. Hollifield, L. Pritchard, G. Mackenzie (sub A. Brothers 45 mins), K. Swain (sub D. Woodbridge 65 mins), K. Searle, S. Perrin (sub D. Evans 45 mins).

ATHERSTONE: M. Clamp, J. Kavanagh, G. Smith, S. Quinney, R. Warhurst, R. McKay, J. Flanagan, A. Harper, R. Smith, R. Mellor, R. Powis (sub B. Vincent 45 mins).

REFEREE: G. Keay (Atherstone). **HALF TIME:** 3-0. **GOAL SCORERS:** Wycombe — Searle 2 (7, 18), Warhurst (o.g. 33), Atherstone — McKay (67).

Attendance (all pay): 689.